

## A BRIEF LOOK AT BIBLICAL PROPHECY

*Bud Morris*

The terrorist activity in the world, that seems to result from a polarization of the “Christian” and “Muslim” ideologies, calls for a review of Biblical prophecy. The book of Daniel is the key to understanding what God has revealed to us about the future. It is well to note that the prophetic scheme generally deals with God's judgment of Israel for their sins, and their eventual restoration to blessing as His people in Christ's righteous kingdom.

The inspired interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel chapter 2:36-45 describes the four empires that were to figure in the development of the prophetic program. Verses 37 & 38 establish that Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon was the first of these empires. Babylon was to be followed (verse 39) by two inferior empires which were to rule successively over the (civilized) earth. Finally (verses 40-43), a fourth empire of crushing strength would subdue the others. This fourth empire apparently was to start out unified, but eventually become a coalition of strong (iron) components held together by a more fragile (clay) allegiance.

Daniel chapter 8 positively identifies the second and third empires. Verse 20 tells us that the ram expanding west, north, and southwards (verse 4) was the Medo-Persian empire (which conquered the Babylonian empire in Daniel 5:30 & 31). Verse 21 explains that the Medo-Persian empire would be conquered by the first king of the Grecian empire--historically, Alexander the Great. Verse 22 states that when he was "broken", four kingdoms would arise in his place. So in the devious power struggles after Alexander's untimely death, four of his generals ended up with significant parts of the Grecian empire:

Seleucus ended up with the Arabic areas generally to the north of Israel (Now Iraq and Syria) as the first "King of the North" of prophecy.

Ptolemy ended up with the Egyptian areas more to the south of Israel as the archetypical "King of the South" of prophecy.

Cassandra ended up with the old Grecian portion of little prophetic note.

Lysimachus ended up with Thrace, which has essentially lost its identity.

The first four verses of Daniel chapter 11 reinforce this sequence of events, implying that divisions of the Grecian empire indeed were to give rise to the kings of the North and South. Also, the historical relationships between the Seleucid (Northern) and Ptolemaic (Southern) divisions of the Grecian empire so closely parallel the events described in the bulk of chapter 11 that there can be little doubt as to their identities.

The fourth empire of Nebuchadnezzar's dream was to ruthlessly subdue the remnants of the first three empires. Historically, the Roman Empire did just that. By the time of Christ, the Romans had subdued what was left of the three preceding empires plus most of what is now known as Western Europe. It was originally unified with the strength of iron, but apparently will be revived at the end times as a more fragile coalition of Western European nations.

Daniel chapter 9 establishes the time schedule of prophetic events. God had given Daniel's people, the nation of Israel, over to the Babylonian empire because of their sins. Jerusalem had been destroyed, and many of the people carried captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. In Daniel 9:24-27, seventy "Weeks" (literally, seventy "Sevens") were decreed by God against Israel "To finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up (finish) vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place." Seven plus sixty-two (Sixty-nine) of these "Weeks" were to be from the time of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, or Christ. History confirms that the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2) was given by Artaxerxes, king of Persia, about 480 years before the crucifixion of Christ. Some say that if the Jewish calendar is used, Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem as the King of Israel comes out to be sixty-nine times seven (483) years to the very day.

But after the "Sixty-two" "Weeks" (which followed the seven "Weeks" to make sixty-nine "Weeks"), Daniel 9:26 tells us that Messiah would be "Cut off and have nothing." So Christ was crucified by the Roman government at the demand of the Jews. He was cut off instead of setting up His promised kingdom in Israel before Daniel's seventieth week of years was fulfilled to atone for Israel's past sins. Obviously, this last seven year period has not yet been fulfilled because "Everlasting righteousness" still eludes the world. Verse 26 continues, "And the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary" Historically, the people who destroyed Jerusalem and burned the Jewish temple (in 69 AD) were the Romans. Thus, the future "Prince who is to come" must be of "Roman" derivation because those people destroyed Jerusalem. He will be the ruthless political leader of the Western European coalition called the "Beast" in Revelation 13:1-10. He will control the world's economy by making sure that no one can buy or sell without the "Mark of the Beast" in his hand or his forehead (Revelation 13:16 & 17). In Daniel 9:27 he will make a "Firm covenant" for one week (seven years) with the Jewish leadership. This corresponds to the last of Daniel's seventy "Weeks," and is generally spoken of as "The Tribulation."

The time between Daniel's sixty-ninth week when Messiah was cut off and the seventieth week of tribulation does not figure in the prophetic scheme. It is the present "Christian" or "Church" age when there is neither Jew nor Gentile in the eyes of God (Galatians 3:28). When all the true Christians, who have repented and trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins through His death on the cross, have been caught up to heaven (I Thessalonians 4:16-18), God will again focus His attention on Israel, finishing their last week of tribulation and establishing Christ's kingdom of righteousness.

During the seven-year Tribulation, the European "Beast" will have a religious counterpart in Israel. He is called the "Antichrist" in I John 2:18 and elsewhere, and "The King" (of Israel) in Daniel 11:36-40. This false Messiah of Israel is the other beast of Revelation 13:(11-18). His government will promote the spiritually compromising "Covenant of Death" (Isaiah 28:18) between the Roman Beast and the unrepentant nation of Israel. These despots will oppress the righteous Jewish minority for the first three and a half years (Revelation 12:6 & 14), denying them the freedom to worship God under penalty of death. Half way through the tribulation period (Daniel 9:27) the Antichrist will desecrate the Temple, taking his seat in it as the Jewish Messiah (II Thessalonians 2:4). Jesus warned the godly to flee from Jerusalem instantly when they see the "Abomination of Desolation" standing in the holy place, as Jerusalem will immediately begin suffering the worst tribulation ever experienced on earth (Matthew 24:15-22).

Daniel 11:40-45 further relates that in the end times Egypt (The King of the South) will attack the Israeli Antichrist. The Arabic contention (The King of the North) will take advantage of this with a ferocious strike, overrunning Israel (The Beautiful Land) and devastating Egypt. The European Coalition apparently will not be able to stop the King of the North's rampage, but rumors from the East and the North will bring him

back to Israel, where he will "Pitch the tents of his royal pavilion." This is the "Overwhelming scourge" of Isaiah 28:14-22 whereby God annuls Israel's "Covenant with death" with the Beast of Western Europe. The King of the North (Iraq) will occupy Israel for a "Time, times, and a half a time" (The remaining three and a half years of the tribulation), until Israel's vitality is completely shattered (Daniel 12:7). The Antichrist "False shepherd" will flee Israel to avoid the wrath of the King of the North (John 10:12,13), but the true Christ will personally destroy the invaders when He returns to Israel to set up His millennial kingdom (Isaiah 10:24-27 & 11).

Finally, the Beast of Western Europe (The revived Roman empire) along with the Antichrist (Here called the "False prophet") will amass the armies the whole earth against the purposes of God in the plains of Armageddon. (Revelation 16:13-16) This is when the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will appear on earth to personally judge the Beast and the Antichrist. (Revelation 19:11-21) The blood of the destruction of the armies of Armageddon will flow "Up to the horses bridles for a distance of two hundred miles." (Revelation 14:20) Daniel's seventieth week over by then, Christ will proceed to set up His kingdom in Israel, judging all unrighteousness and putting down all opposition (As Russia, Ezekiel 39) in succession. "Vision and prophecy" will indeed be sealed up and "Everlasting righteousness" finally brought in.

Now the pertinent point is that after the rapture of the church, there will be a seven year period of God's judgment on the nation of Israel which will finally usher in the millennial Kingdom of Christ where righteousness will reign. Primary roles are to be played by an Arab (Iraq et al) contention North of Israel (The King of the North), Egypt (The King of the South), Western Europe (Derived from the old Roman Empire) and Israel itself. And that's how things are stacking up! Israel re-emerged as a nation in 1948. Virtually all the Arab nations hate Israel and are actively struggling to exterminate it. Egypt was allied with the rest of the Arabs until it estranged itself from them by making peace with Israel in settlement of the Yom Kipper War of 1972. Recently Western Europe was allied with America in the war against Iraq which was perceived by most of the Middle East as a holy war against all Muslims. The recent terrorist attacks in the U.S. have further polarized the East and West. The Muslims link the whole conflict to the Israeli presence, and virtually all the elements except Israel agree that the Palestine issue will have to be addressed by the international community before there can be a lasting peace in the Middle East. Never before has the political situation been so consistent with the end-time events described in Biblical prophecy.

It seems that God is oiling the prophetic clock that stopped when Christ was crucified two thousand years ago. We keep hearing it tick and seeing sporadic movements of the hands. No one knows exactly when the chime of the prophetic clock will usher in the end times, but the world situation indicates that they are indeed drawing near. And Christ will be calling the real Christians up to heaven to be with Himself before Israel's seventieth week begins. There is no need to be left behind for this world's judgment. Be ready!

*www.BudMorris.net*